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COVER STORY

Chicago's race to the top

Leonor Vivanco

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Chicago may be known as The Second City, but two high-profile skyscraper developments -- the Chicago Spire and Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago -- prove our toddlin' town is second to none when it comes to upscale prime real estate.

The Chicago Spire opened its sales offices last month touting a 10,000-square-foot, two-floor penthouse unit near the top of the 150-story twisting tower. The customizable space, which takes up floors 140 and 141, will offer 360-degree, floor-to-ceiling views of the city and the lake, as well as glimpses of Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin.

The price tag: \$40 million -- or about \$4,000 per square foot, the most ever for a Chicago condo.

"It is a true trophy. It's a piece of art as much as being a true residence," said Michael Golden, co-founder of @properties, a Chicago-based real estate brokerage firm managing sales for the Spire. One special feature the architect envisioned is a glass staircase connecting the two floors of the penthouse, he said. The Spire's penthouse is set for completion in 2012.

The Spire's approximately 2,000 units have drawn interest from prospective buyers locally and internationally, Golden said. The penthouse was still on the market as of Friday.

Over at the 92-story Trump Towers, which opened four floors of hotel rooms Wednesday, there are nine penthouses among the 486 luxury residences under construction.

The largest penthouse, a 14,000-square-foot space that takes up the 89th floor and has 360-degree views of the city, has no disclosed price tag and isn't on the market yet, sales manager Leah Harriett said.

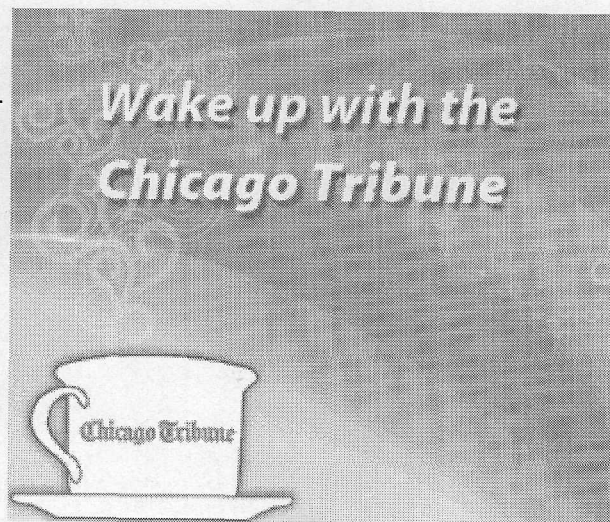
The other penthouses, on floors 86 to 88, range from 2,350 square feet to 6,850 square feet and are priced from \$3.3 million to more than \$9 million, Harriett said. Half of these penthouse units have been sold, she said.

One great perk for Trump tower residents is access to the hotel's amenities and services, which include a 75-foot indoor pool overlooking the Chicago River as well as the hotel's concierge, room service and dry

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cleaning and housekeeping services. Residents also will be able to arrange for a hotel restaurant chef to cook a meal in their home.

There's a certain expectation of luxury that goes with Trump Tower, Harriett told RedEye.

"We think they'll find the building exceeds by far every expectation they might have," she said.

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